



NOAA Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries Coral Reef Conservation Program



Coral reefs support valuable fisheries resources and threatened and endangered species such as the hawksbill turtle



NOAA Fisheries (National Marine Fisheries Service - NMFS) is a steward of living marine resources for the benefit of the nation. The goal of the NOAA Fisheries Coral Reef Conservation Program is to preserve, sustain, and restore the condition of coral reef ecosystems and the species that depend on them; to promote the wise management and sustainable use of coral reef fisheries to benefit local communities and the Nation; and to develop sound scientific information needed to manage coral reef ecosystems.

NOAA Fisheries received \$11 million for coral reef programs in FY-2001 and FY-2002. They are part of a coordinated NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program in partnership with NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) and other NOAA Line Offices. NMFS activities are coordinated through the Office of Habitat Conservation and implemented primarily through the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Southeast Region, Honolulu Laboratory and Pacific Islands Area Office.

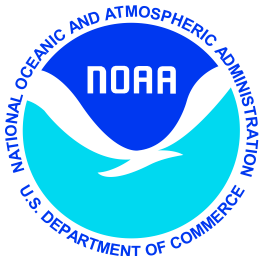
Why do we do it?

Coral reefs and associated habitats support valuable recreational and commercial fisheries in the United States. More than 50 percent of all federally managed fishery species depend on coral reefs for part of their lifecycle, including more than 500 commercially available fishes and invertebrates. Coral reefs are also home to threatened and endangered species, such as sea turtles and the Hawaiian monk seal, as well as corals and groupers that are candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

What do we do?

Map Coral Reefs: NMFS is supporting efforts to characterize and map shallow coral reefs and is working with partners to map deeper reefs, which represent essential fish habitat for many important coral reef fisheries.

Monitor and Assess Reef Resources: NMFS is building on its existing expertise to assess and monitor U.S. coral reef resources in the Atlantic and Pacific, and bringing its extensive data and information holdings on-line through the Coral Reef Information System (CoRIS).





NMFS scientist monitoring coral reef fishes in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands



NMFS research is helping understand the ecosystem links between fishes and their habitats



Removing marine debris from reefs in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

Research: NMFS scientists and their partners are supporting targeted research designed to answer key questions necessary to incorporate ecosystem approaches into coral reef management.

Increase Social and Economic Understanding of Coral Reefs: NMFS has begun work with fishers in USVI to conduct the first comprehensive census of the coral reef commercial fishery and develop participatory fishery co-management approaches with fishing communities.

Marine Protected Areas: NMFS is supporting efforts by the State of Hawaii and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to evaluate the effectiveness of their coral reef marine protected area systems in partnership with stakeholders.

Reduce Adverse Impacts of Fishing: A core mandate of NOAA Fisheries is to reduce overfishing and fishing-associated habitat impacts on coral reefs. NMFS assesses essential fish habitat, identifies impacts associated with fishing and fishing gear, and implements actions to reduce these impacts. The agency also is working to support Regional Fishery Management Councils in incorporating ecosystem-scale management techniques into their fishery management plans for reef areas.

Reduce Pollution from Marine Debris: The most serious anthropogenic impact on coral reefs in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands is marine debris, mostly derelict fishing nets and gear from distant water fisheries. NMFS is leading a three year effort, begun in 2001, to remove all major accumulated debris from these reefs.

Restore Damaged Reefs: NMFS is monitoring the recovery of reef fishes in restoration sites in the Florida Keys and Puerto Rico, assisting in seagrass restoration at a site in Puerto Rico, and assessing the efficacy of three major coral transplantation efforts in Hawaii.

Reduce Impacts from Trade in Coral Reef Species: The United States is the largest importer of live coral and reef fishes for the aquarium trade. In many cases, U.S. demand appears to be driving collection at unsustainable levels. NMFS is working with partners to enhance efforts to collect and analyze accurate U.S. trade data for coral species and live marine aquarium fishes.

Coral Reef Conservation Grants Program and Coral Reef Conservation Fund: NMFS and NOS are collaborating on these new programs called for by the *Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000*.

For more information:

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